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"The Passenger Department of Canadian Steam Railways."

AN ADDRESS

GIVEN BEFORE THE

Canadian Railway Club, Montreal

BY

Mr. G. T. Bell

**General Passenger and Ticket Agent, Grand Trunk
Railway System**

December 4th, 1906

Mr. President and members of the Canadian Railway Club,—

You have honored me by requesting an address upon the "Passenger service," but it seems to me no single person, certainly no departmental officer, could do justice to so great a subject. I have, therefore, concluded to confine my remarks to some things which may interest you as fellow railway employees, regarding "The Passenger Department of Canadian Steam Railways."

In the beginning the passenger department had little or no individuality. It was merely an attachment to the general

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manager's, general superintendent's, auditor's, or some other office. This was natural when the railways were small, and all that seemed necessary was to issue a tariff of fares to several local stations and place it and some card tickets in the hands of a few agents and conductors. As the traffic developed, however, and the railways commenced to spread over the entire country and enter into friendly alliances with connecting lines in the United States and Mexico, the larger stations required ticket agents thoroughly qualified to advise as to the most inexpensive and comfortable, or luxurious and generally attractive routes available to reach everywhere in his own and adjacent countries, and even across the oceans to Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Islands of the Seas. Passenger agents became necessary at principal stations to aid in the reception at one train and transfer to another of ladies travelling alone, the young, the aged and the inexperienced. The way-freight and "mixed" trains that sufficed to move together the passengers and their goods were gradually replaced by exclusively passenger trains, and these rapidly supplemented by "limited" trains making stops at principal stations only and restricted in the number and class of cars hauled, as required by the speedy schedules. Elaborate ticket offices were soon provided in the heart of the chief cities, and in many cases in smaller places, at which reservations may be made in advance of sleeping and parlor car, steamer, and other accommodations, trips are suggested and their time and cost considered, and full information imparted, all designed to make travel pleasant and encourage everyone to benefit by the educational and other advantages which it affords. An army of travelling passenger agents are employed to solicit the patronage of the public at home and abroad; those who hesitate are assisted to make up their minds, parties are organized and accompanied, tons of literature distributed gratuitously, telling of the country traversed by or tributary to the railway, and passenger traffic is promoted by every legitimate and ingenious effort. For more effective work, district or division passenger representatives were appointed, who could more closely study and keep in touch with conditions within their territory. The representatives are kept in harmony with the railways' general policy by continuous consultation with the general passenger agents, and the growth of many rail-

ways into large systems has necessitated several general passenger agents for one system, who report to a passenger traffic manager, the latter being in command of the passenger department and responsible to the president, or sometimes to a vice-president, who directs both freight and passenger departments.

I have briefly traced the organization of the passenger department as it to-day exists, and it may be of interest to say something of the nature of the duties performed by the staff at headquarters. The main divisions of this staff are:—

1. Tariffs and tickets.
2. Excursions.
3. Advertising.
4. Immigration and colonization.
5. Statistics.
6. Accounts.
7. Refunds.

I presume the majority of persons have no idea of the labor and expense necessary to provide ticket agents with the fares, tickets, and instructions in relation thereto required to expeditiously and correctly sell tickets of many different classes to practically all places of importance on the American Continent over, in round numbers, 250,000 miles of steam railway tracks, and, in addition, over numerous lake, river, and ocean navigation lines. Local tariffs on the principal railways with large mileage are issued in divisions, the fares from each station on the division to every other station on the same division being carefully shown, calculated on the mileage at the legal or maximum rate per mile authorized by the railway company's charter or approved by the Railway Commission. Competitive fares of other lines must be watched and met where it can be done judiciously without lowering the local fares to an unprofitable extent. If there are 100 stations on a division the total separate fares to be calculated and printed in the local tariff of that division would be 10,000. To facilitate the issue of tickets from a station on one division to any other station on the same railway, each agent is provided with an inter-division tariff, which contains fares from junction stations on each division to all stations on the railway which, by one

addition of the fare to and from the junction, readily gives any local fare required. The division tariffs are prepared with the view of embracing in the same tariff all stations between which the volume of traffic is large or naturally flows, and to reduce to a minimum the necessity of adding fares to and from junction stations. Conductors are provided with tariffs of fares of a size and character suitable to their various runs. To stations on connecting lines the practice is, as far as practicable, to select a compiler of common tariffs in behalf of a group of lines more or less interwoven as connections or competitors, or both, in a certain section, or from important cities like Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, etc., to stations on other groups of lines, or in many cases to principal stations on all connecting lines, the fares being arranged by classes, and to every State, Province, etc., in alphabetical order. This work of compiling and printing interline tariffs is aided greatly by the lines in various sections acting together in publishing their fares from basing or constructive stations through territorial traffic organizations. Each railway requires an elaborate chart of forms of interline tickets for guidance of ticket agents, detailing the lines and innumerable combinations of lines forming through routes to all parts of the country. Principal ticket offices have a complete supply of interline tickets applicable from their stations: other offices have a supply of only such forms of interline tickets as are likely to be frequently requested, and if asked for other forms use an "exchange order," which designates the route, number, and class of the required interline ticket, which is furnished to passenger at the nearest convenient "exchange" office, a list of all such offices being in possession of each ticket agent. The use of the "exchange order" enables agents at small stations to give the public the benefit of through fares, as well as get their baggage checked through to destination. The charts and tariffs, especially those to stations on connecting lines, are subject to many changes, owing to new lines being opened, old lines extended, and consolidations between existing lines, requiring new tickets, withdrawal or alteration of old tickets, fares to new stations, changes in fares to old stations, etc. Some idea of the expense of printing tariffs and tickets may be gained by the fact that a railway company operating between New York and Chicago recently had occasion to

reprint its local passenger tariffs, the total cost being approximately \$15,000, and that one railway of 3,200 miles of track, handling about ten million passengers each year, pays for printing its tickets about \$20,000 per annum.

In addition to the tariffs already alluded to, which apply to what may be termed ordinary passenger traffic, or, in other words, fares which are in force daily throughout the year, for one way tickets for single passengers a great many special tariffs are required to provide for reduced fares below the maximum basis, given by the railway companies with the object of creating travel that otherwise would not move at all or in much smaller volume. The following will serve as examples of such special tariffs:—

1. Round trip tickets on sale daily at 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. less than double the one way fare, valid for one month.
2. Round trip tickets on certificates for persons attending meetings of regularly organized societies. These reduced fares vary according to total attendance from about the one way fare to one and one-third fare for the return journey. The railways in Ontario and Quebec grant reduced fares for two or three hundred of such meetings each year.
3. One thousand mile tickets, the general rate being \$25.00, which is 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents per mile.
4. Organized parties of 10 or more at one and one-third fare for round trip, or two-thirds fare when circuit (going one way and returning another), is being made.
5. Members of Commercial Travellers' Associations who travel constantly for at least three months each year. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cents per mile for one way tickets, and week-end round trip tickets at one way fare. About 20,000 members of five Canadian Commercial Travellers' Associations benefit by this reduction.
6. Cricket, lacrosse, baseball, hockey, curling, and other organized clubs, in addition to reduction already stated for organized parties of 10 or more, are accorded 10 to 18 round trip tickets, for actual players, at one way fare. This is to encourage such clubs to make long trips, which many amateur clubs,

comprised largely of young men of limited means, otherwise would hesitate to take.

7. Charitable homes for deaf and dumb, blind, etc., 2 cents per mile.
8. Theatrical and concert troupes, bands, orchestras, lectures, and other organized parties of ten or more persons professionally engaged in giving public entertainments, 2 cents per mile.
9. Guaranteed parties of 100 or more under auspices of organized associations, clubs, societies, churches, Sunday schools, mercantile firms, etc., at fares netting from 2 cents per mile for short distances down to about $\frac{1}{2}$ cent per mile for longer distances. The associations, etc., are permitted to sell tickets at certain higher fixed rates, averaging about twenty per cent., which is paid to them to cover the necessary advertising expenses, etc., and to aid their benevolent and other funds, which is a valuable incentive and materially promotes the success of such excursions. The rates are generally higher where these excursions are run in the winter, when operating expenses are greater and the number inclined to travel smaller; also if run to commercial centres at any season, as they naturally discount the regular business travel to such centres.
10. Military bodies of 100 or more, in uniform, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cent per mile. Such organizations usually stimulate general excursion travel to the place they visit.
11. Celebrations, demonstrations, regattas, political meetings, etc., round trip at one way fare; but as experience has shown few extra passengers are attracted to ordinary events of this character, where the one way fare exceeds \$2.50 reduced fares are restricted to that limit.
12. Civic holidays, at one way fare for round trip from the stations celebrating the holiday.
13. Agricultural exhibitions, generally, round trip at one way fare, and, in addition, on certain days to large exhibitions in incorporated cities, offering exceptional prizes, attractions, etc., about two-thirds one way fare for round trip.

14. Sportsmen in parties of 5 or more on hunting and fishing expeditions to restricted territory, one and one-third fare. Such trips are generally longer and more expensive than the average of other special parties, and it is more difficult, therefore, to organize parties of ten or more.
15. School and college vacations at Christmas and Easter of non-resident pupils and teachers returning to their homes, round trip tickets at one and one-third fare.
16. Public holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Dominion Day, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving Day, round trip tickets at one way fare, with several days' time limit, and at one and one-third fare with longer limits.
17. Commutation fares between cities and suburban stations where a large number of persons reside who travel daily to and from their place of business, from about six-tenths of a cent to one and one-half cent per mile, according to distance and restricted privileges of tickets—the lowest rate applying to such tickets as are valid for one person only who must average one round trip daily. The minimum for a single trip is 5 cents.

Excursions local to a district are generally arranged by the district or division passenger agent, who deals direct with the public, takes guarantee, orders tickets, notifies the transportation department of the train and probable coach requirements, instructs agents as to sale of tickets, and advises the general passenger department of the completed arrangement, which, in turn, is transmitted to the auditor of receipts, who checks agents' ticket reports, prepares and furnishes to the general passenger department statement of sales and rebates due the promoters, voucher for which is then made and passed to the treasurer, who remits or instructs agent to pay the amount. If the excursions pass over connecting lines the negotiations with and advices to and acknowledgments from such lines are handled by the general passenger departments of the various lines concerned. The utmost care is necessary to see that every detail is understood in advance by each person responsible for any part of the excursion, as a slip anywhere might cause serious

inconvenience and discomfort to a large number of persons. It is the exacting, unimaginative side of the passenger department where mathematical accuracy must govern every move, yet the great variety of organizations and greater variety of promoters and patrons—comprising all classes of the social structure—afford some relief from the otherwise continuous strain of the excursion work, more especially during the summer months. On the intelligent, energetic, careful efforts of the excursion staff much depends in the way of developing traffic, by directing attention to new resorts which the public are constantly seeking and by co-operating with the transportation department in handling successfully each party, thus causing them to desire to repeat the pleasing experience.

A few weeks ago Mr. John J. Byrne, the head of the passenger department in California of one of the greatest United States railways—himself a former Canadian railway employee—in addressing the general passenger agents of America used these words:—

*“Unrest is the seed of passenger traffic, and you are the sower. If you have an inland town, give the people a chance to get to the ocean or to the lake; if you have a flat country, give them a chance to go to the hills or mountains; if you have a hill country, coax them out to the fertile plains. * * * Show the city man the country, and paint its green hills and babbling brooks till he can't resist. Lecture the farmers on the lure of the city, its glittering lights and gilded palaces of amusement. Preach the belief that travel is the great educator; make parents feel that the children should be educated away from home, and make the children long for the delights of home. Hang fine pictures of distant scenes in the school-room; thus the teacher will be constrained to go, that he may explain it to his pupils. By travel the minister can find themes for his sermons and the lawyer find modern instances. Picture to the sturdy the charm of the place at the other end of your road for golf, or boating, or bathing; to the hunter tell of the game just \$10.00 distant from where he is. East of the Rockies no fish are caught equal to those near Catalina or in the Columbia; on the Pacific Coast the best fish*

are in the Atlantic or Gulf. Distance, not time, is the great healer of sorrow, and change is as good as a rest."

This sowing of unrest, so aptly described, is an important part of the work of the passenger department particularly in charge of the advertising staff. I believe it is a safe assertion that of all the great agencies of our modern civilization none equal the transportation lines of Canada and of America in utilizing publicity in its myriad forms. One of our great Canadian railways, aside from the millions of readers repeatedly reached through its advertising in the daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, and other publications not issued by itself, distributed during the past year, almost entirely without cost to recipients, the enormous total of over three million and one-half separate pieces of advertising, comprising finely printed and illustrated guide books to about a score of Canadian tourist and health resorts, wall and vest pocket maps, art prints—framed and unframed—of Canadian natural scenery and engineering and other achievements, packs of picture playing cards, timetables—complete, sectional, and local—posters and other bills. Nor does this include the display of large photographs, mounted fish and game, biograph pictures, stereopticon slides, etc., employed in world, international, national, sportsmen and travelling exhibitions, lectures and other forms of educational, industrial, sociological, and entertaining enterprises. I will not detain you by enlarging, but suggest it would be of interest to you to have a separate paper on "Art in railway advertising," or a like subject, from some of our experts in this field. Nor can justice be done in a single paper to the immigration and colonization side of the passenger department work which, in co-operation with the Dominion and Provincial authorities, is of vital and far-reaching importance to the whole of Canada. This also should be treated separately, and I am sure will be of special interest at this time when extraordinary activity is manifest everywhere both as to new settlers and the opening up of millions of acres of fertile land.

I will pass over the statistical and accounting branches of the passenger department, without which its effective work would be much impaired by lack of comparison of results which the statistics furnish on the one hand, and by confusion

in dealing with the multitude of bills for advertising, printing, etc., on the other; nor will I delay to explain the system of dealing with the thousands of claims for refunds upon unused or partly used tickets, chiefly growing out of human joy, sorrow, vicissitude, and instability; but, with your indulgence, will say a little about that important side of the passenger department which aids in supplying the sinews of war for us all, namely, passenger earnings.

When Canadian steam railways earn for carrying passengers from the single track mileage of 20,487, which they operated last year, the grand total of \$154,410,519, instead of \$28,959,650, they will have reason to congratulate themselves, as their passenger earnings will then equal those of the New England railways which enter the State of Massachusetts, and which last year, with a total of 4,962 single track miles, received from passengers \$37,399,209. But this desirable result will probably not be attained until 512,933,019 passengers annually travel on the 20,487 miles of track, instead of 25,288,723 passengers who paid fares last year. For every mile of track the New England passengers paid for transportation \$7,537, against \$1,413 paid in Canada. Twenty-five thousand and thirty-seven passengers in the year used the New England railways, and only 1,234 passengers used the Canadian railways for each mile of track operated. If all of the steam railways in the United States, outside of the 4,962 miles in New England, had received from passengers the same gross earnings per track mile as the New England railways, instead of \$435,295,523, those railways not within the passenger man's Garden of Eden would have earned from passengers on their 212,011 miles of track \$1,597,926,907. Did I hear anyone remark that the "conditions" in New England must be vastly different than in the rest of the United States and in Canada? Exactly so!

And what is the essential element in this difference of "conditions"? Density of population—not of the people, for nowhere else in America have we so much culture in so small an area. According to the latest census, each 1,000 persons in Massachusetts helped to support only three-quarters of one mile of the 2,111 miles of steam railway track in that State; whereas, in our most populous Province of Ontario the same number of persons help to keep passenger trains moving on three and one-quarter miles of steam railway

track. And if you consider that the 1,000 prospective passengers are spread over Massachusetts at the average density of 350 to each square mile of area in that State, against 10 to each square mile in Ontario, it will help you further to grasp why the steam railways of Canada are unwilling to abandon the fruits of much experience for the theories of the demagogue. A city seven miles long and two miles wide has an area of 14 square miles. With a population of 400,000 such a city would average 28,571 to each square mile. On 124 miles of track the Montreal Street Railway last year carried 64,334,418 passengers, an average of 518,826 passengers for each track mile. This is a condition of density which justifies the application of the "zone" system of fares where you pay as much for 100 yards as for 1,000 or 10,000 yards. The districts within and surrounding great cities are the nearest approach to a condition where experiments with the "zone" method of passenger fares may be carefully undertaken, and the steam railways already recognize that principle to some extent in their commutation fares for daily patrons of their suburban trains. The people of Canada are, however, much more vitally interested in having railways enough to develop all parts of their great country and in the prosperity of their partners, the railways, than in the maximum rate per mile which, owing to voluntary reductions already alluded to, is paid only by transient passengers, who are but a small percentage of the total number carried. The railways should be permitted to work out their destinies and tariffs in accordance with the good, old, safe law of supply and demand, and without undue, and often unreasonable, legislative interference. If the comparatively few transient passengers pay less, the masses, of limited incomes, and who cannot afford to travel except on public holiday and other greatly reduced excursion fares, must pay more; otherwise the service must deteriorate and contract instead of continuing to improve and expand. Evidence that the railways are not unmindful of public comfort and are willing, if not bound, to divide their prosperity with the public is furnished by the fact that the old and disliked mixed trains are gradually disappearing, last year the total mileage of such trains on all Canadian railways being 6,133,098, against 9,530,816 in 1904, a reduction of 36 per cent., and while with 13 per cent. increase in track mileage and 33 per cent.

increase in passenger train mileage, gross passenger earnings from 1901 to 1905 increased 49 per cent., deposits by the public in the chartered banks of Canada increased by \$159,733,530 in the same period, equal to more than 50 per cent., which magnificent increase exceeded the gross earnings of all the Canadian steam railways from passenger, freight and all other sources of traffic last year by \$53,266,331.